

It is several hundred years old, it is of a broad, perfectly conical shape, but arrived at full maturity, its peaked summit begins then to decay, and it assumes gradually the round-beaded form: its stem is of stout proportions, stiff and erect; its branches strike out horizontally, beginning very close to the ground; and both are rough, being grooved or indented lengthwise. Its leaves are small, long and slender, of a needle form, and very close: it bears cones, also a scarlet, sweet, and glutinous berry, which incloses a small hard seed or nut, the kernel of which is not unwholesome; but the bark or wood of the tree itself would appear to be otherwise, for at Credition, a farmer having cut down a yew-tree, and left two or three faggots lying where four bullocks had free access, and these having been for some time deprived of green fodder, they ate them with great avidity, and very soon died—the poison having, as it was proved, acted on the brain and nervous system, producing congestion in the membranes of the former, and other symptoms resembling apoplexy. The yew will grow in moist soils, but it loves a sandy loam, and chalky situations are very favourable to its success: it is propagated by the seeds, sown in autumn as soon as ripe.

104. The gloomy associations connected with the yew, its qualifications for the adornment of places consecrated to solemnity, its ancient dedication to such purposes, its own sombre appearance, and the tardiness of its growth, conspire greatly against its cultivation, and leave it almost entirely to its old and appropriate haunt, the church-yard: the examples of ancient yews of great magnitude in such situations are numerous, and contain incontrovertible evidence of their having necessarily existed before either Roman or Christian had interrupted the sacrificial rites of Druidism; and a conclusion has therefore reasonably suggested itself, that this solemn evergreen was, from the suitableness of its shade, and its enduring nature, especially cultivated by the Druids in forming their sacred circles, and that the promulgators of Christianity, in superseding Druidical worship, erected their churches, and set out their church-yards, in the very groves which they desired to consign to oblivion. Of the superstitious estimation in which it has been held, we read that dead bodies were covered "by shroud of white, stuck all with yew," and that, in some parts of England, to preserve them from putrefaction, they were rubbed over with an infusion of its leaves.

105. In olden times the wood of the yew was held in high estimation, as furnishing the material for the long bow, the pliant and trusty weapon of the hero of merry Sherwood; and which contributed so greatly to securing the splendid victories of Cressy, Poitiers, and Azincourt; indeed, so highly was it esteemed, that statutes were enacted for its preservation, and for preventing the wood from being exported. It was also the law of the land that every man should have a bow made of it, or of some similar wood: the introduction of fire-arms, however, had the effect of deteriorating its value in a great measure, and the tree came in course of time to be regarded chiefly as an object of ornament; in which capacity, in the parks and lawns of our nobility, as well as in hedges, it was subjected to the vilest whims of fantastic imagery, being clipped into the most grotesque and ridiculous chimeras, vestiges of which are extant even at the present day. The wood is hard, compact in texture, fine and close in grain, elastic, susceptible of a very high polish, and unequalled in durability: it is therefore valuable and highly appropriate for the cabinet-maker's art, especially when cut into veneers, so as to bring out to advantage its veins and various shades of colour, which are very beautiful. It is also obviously desirable for axle-trees, but for which its scarcity must preclude it being made available.

(To be continued.)

#### COLOSSAL COLUMN IN RUSSIA.

THE Alexander Column is viewed with very justifiable pride by the Russians, because it is the most remarkable of the kind in the whole world; neither ancient nor modern times ever saw so large a piece of stone fashioned from the quarry. (?) But then art has done its best to spoil the effect which this work produces.

The column is surmounted by a gigantic figure of Hope, holding the cross, and pointing upwards, but in attitude so unfortunate that, seen from two sides, the exceedingly small head of the heavenly bandmaid, which is unaccountably poked forward, is hidden by the perpendicular of the cross, and gives the appearance of a headless figure, reminding one irresistibly of the favourite English sign of the "Original Good Woman." "How is it," was observed to a certain Russian, whose family was notorious for its wit, which it appears was hereditary,—"How is it that this figure of Hope is without a head?" "Would Hope itself," he replied, "dare to take up its abode beneath the withering glance of a Russian emperor, *si elle n'avait pas perdu la tête?*" The very anecdotes connected with this column would fill a volume, and are highly illustrative of the state of things in Russia. A recent traveller relates that orders were given to procure a piece of granite eighty-four feet long; in place of which, the director having found one nearly one hundred, cut off the superfluous length, in literal obedience to his instructions. *Si non e vero e ben trovato.* This splendid pillar was found to contain a deep crack, which was hastily filled up with cement, and the whole polished over; but when raised to its present position, a few summers and winters rendered the crack again apparent. That the column was cracked there could be no doubt; that the crack will ever spread in a stone so durable as red granite is another question. But in Russia nothing belonging to the government can be admitted to have even a flaw. The imperial vaults was touched, had a commission of admirals, generals, and counsellors of state, was formed, to proceed to the top of the column by scaffolding, and verify the existence or non-existence of the alleged flaw, which stared all St. Petersburg in the face. Whether the commission endeavoured to deceive the emperor by reporting as he wished—for it is always an ungracious task to be the bearer of any tidings which disturb the serenity of the spring-head of the state—or whether they had their cue to deceive the public, is difficult to determine; but they unanimously agreed, "that it was an optical delusion, occasioned by the imperfect polish of that part," &c. We cannot charitably admit that all the members of the unanimous commission were themselves deceived, unless they were more than St. Thomas like: because two of them were previously heard to admit that they had themselves put their fingers into the crevice before the column was raised up at all.—*Travels in Russia, 1834.*

#### LECTURES ON ARCHITECTURE AND ANTIQUITIES.

##### Lecture V.

##### ROMAN ARCHITECTURE.

(Continued from p. 484.)

LEAVING the Arcades and Temples of Rome, we have now to contemplate her single columns erected in honour of some of the emperors, and styled emphatically *Triumphal*, as the inscriptions testify. The first which comes under our notice is the COLUMN of TRAJAN, erected A.D. 114, from the design of Apollodorus. It rose in stately grandeur to the midst of a magnificent Forum which bore the emperor's name, and some fragments of the columns which composed it still remain. An extensive excavation discovered that the original pavement of the Forum was 15 feet below the level of the modern streets; and a wall is now built, by which means the whole of the Trajan column is fully developed. The Forum must have been very splendid; the port excavated shews a length of 170 feet, and it is said to have extended to 1150 feet; the width was 180 feet, divided by four rows of columns into five aisles, the central avenue being 83 feet wide. The whole of this area is supposed, from careful investigation, to have been under cover; as the marble pavement is only 1 1/2 inch thick to those parts which were under cover, whilst it is 4 inches in thickness where exposed. This pavement was laid out in squares of different marbles, viz., white, veined, giallo antico, and pavonazzetto. In the centre of the Forum stood a noble equestrian statue of Trajan; and the top of the porticoes was adorned with equestrian and other statues, and with military ornaments, chiefly in bronze.

The Forum was surrounded by a library, a basilica, a temple, and a triumphal arch. The column is of white marble, the pedestal is 20 feet 3 inches square, and composed of seven pieces of marble. The shaft of the column is in nineteen pieces, the lower diameter is 12 feet 2 inches; the stairs are cut out of the solid blocks; the pedestal is 17 feet 11 inches high, and the column 97 feet 9 inches. The ancient crowning pedestal is 9 feet 6 inches, on which formerly stood the statue of the emperor, which was taken down to make room for the statue of Saint Peter, placed there by Pope Sixtus V. The ashes of the emperor were contained in an urn placed on the summit, an honour, as Eutropius observes, which had never been decreed to any before him. This column is Roman-Doric in its style (though by some called Tuscan), having the ovolo under the abacus carved with the Ionic egg and anchor ornaments, and a member below that cut into the head enrichment. This capital is in one block 14 feet square and 5 feet deep; The shaft of the column, with the exception of about 1 foot at top which is fluted, is entirely covered with sculptured figures which proceed in a spiral direction from the base to the summit. These reliefs represent the exploits of Trajan in his different wars. The pedestal is ornamented with trophies and arms, and crowned with festoons supported by four eagles.

The ANTONINE column was erected by the emperor Marcus Aurelius, in commemoration of victories obtained over the Germans, Armenians, and Parthians, as the inscription records, and dedicated to Antoninus Pius. It stands in a square called from it the Piazza Colonna. The height of the column itself is only 6 inches less than that of Trajan, but its diameter at the base is nearly 1 foot more, and the upper diameter is only 1 inch less than the lower diameter of Trajan's column. It has therefore rather a clumsy appearance from the want of sufficient diminution. Though the two columns are so nearly of the same height, the pedestal of the Antonine exceeds that of the Trajan considerably. The earth has accumulated around it and buried about 10 feet of it, the remainder is 25 feet 10 inches high, exceeding the pedestal of Trajan's column by eight feet. The whole height from the present doorway to the top of the capital is 123 feet, an excess of about 8 feet above the other column. It was, like that, sculptured with figures, in a spiral direction, in high relief, but not so well executed; the sculptures represent the victories of Marcus Aurelius. This column, being much ruined, was in 1589 repaired by Pope Sixtus V., who cased it with travertine stone, and placed on the summit the statue of St. Paul, instead of that of the Emperor Antoninus. To this displacement of the imperial effigies to make way for those of the Saints, Lord Byron alludes in "Childe Harold" (C. IV., l. 110):—

"And apostolic statues climb  
To crush the imperial urn whose ashes slept  
sublime."

The pedestal is quite plain at present, but was originally adorned with sculpture.

The column of PHOCAS is of Greek marble; it is simply a fluted Corinthian column 4 feet in diameter, and the whole height, including the pedestal, is 54 feet. It is supposed to have been erected in honour of the emperor in his lifetime (he died A.D. 610), and to have had a statue on the summit, as inferred from a restored inscription which purports that the column and statue were erected by the Patriarch Smaragdus, Exarch of Italy, and Provost of the Imperial Palace. Phocas rendered himself so odious by his vices and tyranny, that Heraclius, was recalled from Africa, by Priscus, son-in-law of the emperor, to rid the country of such a monster.

We have noticed some of the finest structures of Rome, in her triumphal arches, her temples, her honorary columns; but

"the greatest is behind."

"He was more  
Than a mere Alexander, and, untaught  
With household blood and wine, severely won  
His conquering virtues,—still we Trajan's name adore."  
Byron.

† M. Aurelius, viz., Armenio Partho Germanico. Belli maximus Divictus. Triumphaliter hanc Columnam rebus gestis insignem Imp. Antonino Pio Patri Dedicavit.